

Head and Injury Policy

Introduction

In compliance with Utah State Board of Education Rule [R277-614](#), Gateway Academy has established this Head Injury and Concussion Policy to provide education about concussions for school personnel, parents, and students. This policy outlines procedures for staff to follow in managing concussions and school policy related to 'return to play' issues following a concussion.

Gateway Academy seeks to provide a safe return to activity for all students following any injury, but particularly after a concussion. In order to effectively and consistently manage these injuries, procedures have been developed to aid in ensuring that concussed students are identified, treated and referred appropriately and that they receive appropriate follow-up medical care during the school day and are fully recovered prior to returning to activity.

School administration, physical education specialists, and applicable school committees must review this protocol annually. Any changes or modifications to this policy will be reviewed with and given to physical education staff and other appropriate school personnel in writing.

All appropriate staff must attend a yearly in-service meeting to discuss procedures for managing sporting event-related concussions.

Recognition of Concussion

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that interferes with the normal function of the brain. It occurs when the brain is rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow to the head or body. What may appear to be only a mild jolt or blow to the head or body can result in a concussion. A concussion can occur even if a player or student in an activity is not knocked out or has lost consciousness.

Common signs of a sports-related concussion that others can observe, are that a student:

- a. Appears dazed or stunned
- b. Is confused
- c. Moves clumsily (has altered coordination)
- d. Has balance problems
- e. Experiences a personality change
- f. Responds slowly to questions
- g. Forgets events prior to hit
- h. Forgets events after the hit

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- i. Experiences a loss of consciousness of any duration

Common symptoms of a concussion that are reported by the student include:

- a. Headache
- b. Fatigue
- c. Nausea or vomiting
- d. Double vision; blurry vision
- e. Sensitive to light or noise
- f. Feeling sluggish
- g. Feeling “foggy”
- h. Problems concentrating

These signs and symptoms following a witnessed or suspected blow to the head or body are indicative of probable concussion. Any student who exhibits these signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall/will be immediately removed from the contest, game, or practice and will not be permitted to return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional as defined in [Utah Code 26-53-301](#). Parent notification must be made for any and all suspected or witnessed head injuries.

Management and Referral Guidelines for All Staff

The following situations indicate a medical emergency and require activation of the Emergency Medical System:

1. Any student with a witnessed loss of consciousness (LOC) of any duration should be spine-boarded and transported immediately to the nearest emergency department via emergency vehicle. LEA staff shall remain in contact with 911 and stabilize the student while waiting for EMS to arrive.
2. Any student who has symptoms of a concussion and is not stable (i.e., condition is worsening) is to be transported immediately to the nearest emergency department via emergency vehicle.
3. A student who exhibits any of the following symptoms should be transported immediately to the nearest emergency department via emergency vehicle.
 - a. Deterioration of neurological function
 - b. Decreasing level of consciousness
 - c. Decrease or irregularity in respirations
 - d. Any signs or symptoms of associated injuries, spine or skull fracture, or bleeding
 - e. Mental status changes including lethargy, difficulty maintaining arousal, confusion or agitation.
 - f. Seizure activity

4. A student who is symptomatic but stable may be transported by his or her parents. The parents should be advised to contact the student's primary care provider or seek care at the nearest emergency department on the day of the injury.
5. Any head injuries reported to LEA staff should be documented in the student's health record in SIS and entered on the Student Injury Report website.

Guidelines and Procedures for Teachers Supervising Contests and Games:

Recognize Concussion:

1. All educators and employees of Gateway Academy should become familiar with the signs and symptoms of concussion described above.
2. Educators and employees of Gateway Academy shall/will have appropriate training about recognizing and responding to traumatic head injuries, consistent with the employees' responsibilities for supervising students.

Remove from Activity

Any student who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) as described above, shall/will be immediately removed from the sporting event and shall will not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional. **When in doubt, sit them out!**

Refer the Student for Medical Evaluation:

The employee of Gateway Academy is responsible for notifying the student's parent(s) of the injury and appropriate processes.

- a. Contact the parent(s) to inform them of the injury. Depending on the injury, either an emergency vehicle will transport or parent(s) will pick the student up at the event for transport.
- b. A medical evaluation is required before returning to play.
- c. If a student's parent(s) cannot be reached, and the student is able to be sent home (rather than directly to MD), the Gateway Academy employee should do the following:
 - a. The Gateway Academy employee should ensure that the student will be with a responsible individual who can monitor the student and understand the home care instructions before allowing the student to go home.
 - b. The Gateway Academy employee should continue efforts to reach a parent.

- c. If there is any question about the student's status or the student cannot be monitored appropriately, the student should be referred to an emergency department for evaluation. A Gateway Academy employee should accompany the student and remain with the student until a parent arrives.
- d. The Gateway Academy employee shall provide for supervision of other students for whom he or she is responsible when accompanying the injured student.

Return to Play (RTP) Procedures After Concussion

Return to activity and play is a medical decision. The student must meet all of the following criteria in order to progress to activity:

1. Asymptomatic at rest and with exertion (including mental exertion in school) AND
2. Have written clearance from the student's primary care provider or concussion specialist (student must be cleared for progression to activity by a physician other than an Emergency Room physician, if diagnosed with a concussion).

Once the above criteria are met, the student will be progressed back to full activity following the step-wise process detailed below. An employee of Gateway Academy must/ will closely supervise this progression. The teacher in charge must have a very specific plan to follow as directed by the student's physician.

Progression is individualized, and will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Factors that may affect the rate of progression include previous history of concussion, duration, and type of symptoms, age of the student, and sport/activity in which the student was injured. A student with a prior history of concussion, one who has had an extended duration of symptoms, or one who is participating in a collision or contact sport may be progressed more slowly.

Stepwise Process:

Step 1. Complete cognitive rest. This may include staying home from school or limiting school hours (and studying) for several days. Activities requiring concentration and attention may worsen symptoms and delay recovery.

Step 2. Return to school full-time.

Step 3. Light exercise. This step cannot begin until the student is no longer having concussion symptoms and is cleared by a physician for further activity. At this point the athlete may begin walking or riding an exercise bike. No weight lifting.

Step 4. Running in the gym or on the field.

Step 5. Resume full activity.

The student should spend one to two days at each step before advancing to the next. If post-concussion symptoms occur at any step, the student must stop the activity, and the treating physician must be contacted. Depending upon the specific type and severity of the symptoms, the student may be told to rest for 24 hours and then resume activity at a level one step below where he or she was when the symptoms occurred. This resumption of activity could be considerably simplified for a student injured during recess compared to a student injured at a game or formal practice.

Free-Play Concussion and Head Injury Management

While many head injuries that happen at school are minor, the following steps are necessary when a student has a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body:

1. Observe the student for signs and symptoms of concussion for a minimum of 30 minutes.
2. Ask people who saw the injury occur about how the injury happened and any concussion signs they observed.
3. Complete the Concussion: [Signs and Symptoms Checklist](#).
4. Notify the student's parent(s) that their child had a head injury and give the guardian(s) the [Parent Notification of Head Injury During School Hours](#) document.

If the student has concussion signs or symptoms:

1. Tell the parent(s) that the student needs to see a healthcare provider experienced in concussion management.
2. Give the parent(s) a copy of the completed Concussion: Signs and Symptoms Checklist for the health care provider to review.
3. Ask for written guidance from the student's healthcare provider about when the student can return to school and physical activity.

If the student does not have concussion signs or symptoms:

1. Have the student return to class, but do not allow the student to return to sports or recreational activities on the same day of the injury.
2. Send a copy of the completed [Concussion: Signs and Symptoms Checklist](#) and the [Parent Notification of Head Injury During School Hours document](#) home with the student for the parent(s) to review.

Ask the parent(s) to continue to observe the student for any changes.

1. Tell the parent(s) that if concussion signs or symptoms appear, the student should be seen immediately by a healthcare provider with experience in concussion management.

Potential Problem Areas

While current Utah law designates that a student may be returned to normal activity by “an appropriate health care provider,” Gateway Academy, in its sole discretion, may limit the credentials from which it will accept clearance in its sole discretion. Generally, students will be required to provide a note from his/her their healthcare provider before being allowed to return to normal activity. This is a very important decision and will be made after careful consideration by the physical education teacher, Director, teacher (elementary), and parent(s). The school's liability carrier may also be consulted.

Gateway Academy will not allow students who are clearly having concussion symptoms to return to play even if given clearance by a health care provider.

Board Reviewed and Approved:

March 9, 2017

December 8, 2023